

Suggested discussion paper for CIVVIH annual meeting in Budapest

By Giora Solar

As for 2013, there are 236 cities, members of the WHCO (World Heritage Cities Organization).

Many conservation issues can be complicated and complex, but it seems that conservation and management of historic towns and settlements, are the most complex of all.

Politics, economy, ownership, land uses, growth, development, traffic, pollution, social issues, poverty, housing, ethnic diversity, stakeholders and users, material decay and more – all contribute to the complexity of the historic towns, their conservation and management.

A WH inscription indicates that a site meets the requirement of OUV, management, state of conservation and one or more of the nomination criteria. The inscription, by definition, is not a protection tool, it indicates that protection is in place.

We should not question the inscription, since there is a process, in which we are taking part.

BUT – it would be extremely important to understand what happens and what has happened to historic cities and urban area, since their inscription as WH sites. Many questions can be asked and following are just some:

1. Has conservation and conservation consideration grown, in general?
2. Are there more conservation projects?
3. Does the city have a conservation unit? Did it exist prior to the inscription?
4. Are there specific legislation and by-laws, for the inscribed areas?
5. Has the state's support grown? (financially and in other ways)
6. Was the inscription well accepted by stakeholders (owners, inhabitants, developers, users)?
7. Has tourism and income from tourism grown? Is the effect of tourism positive? Does it have negative aspects as well (on cultural heritage)?
8. Did the inscription change spirit of place, traditional housing and land use patterns?
9. What was the effect of the inscription on property values?
10. Does the site have a management plan, is it implemented, is it effective?
11. Does the site have monitoring indicators and are they used?
12. Did the inscription have a generally positive impact on the site, its stakeholders and conservation? Did it make any change in these aspects?

Many more questions can and should be asked, and it is obvious that in most cases we don't have answers. It is also obvious that most of the sites do not have answers, which based on studies.

ICOMOS, and CIVVIH as its scientific committee, should look into these issues and suggest a methodological study, with conclusions and possible recommendations. Such studies can be carried out through CIVVIH's regional sub committees – commissioned by the WH Centre (UNESCO), through ICOMOS Paris, in collaboration with the WHCO.

We should create a working group, composed of regional representatives, to follow up on this initiative, to negotiate actions with ICOMOS, WHC, WHCO and others.

The task can become impossible if not well defined, with clear scope and working methods.

The objective of our discussion in Budapest should be:

1. Agreeing on the need for such action (hope to convince you).
2. Creation of a working group and decisions on the immediate following actions.

The rest - such as, different issues to include in the studies, methodologies (questionnaires, workshops etc.), finances (for carrying out the studies), work plan, time tables and more, is suggested to be discussed via electronic media among the members of working group. The group will report periodically to the committee on progress and ideas and will seek the members' advice

Giora Solar, August 30th
Jerusalem (WH City)